

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 50th Legislature (2006)

SENATE BILL 1419

By: Kerr

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to state government; amending Section 1, Chapter 471, O.S.L. 2004 (74 O.S. Supp. 2005, Section 8303), which relates to the Rural Action Partnership Program; clarifying language; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY Section 1, Chapter 471, O.S.L. 2004 (74 O.S. Supp. 2005, Section 8303), is amended to read as follows:

Section 8303. A. There is hereby created within the Oklahoma Department of Commerce the Rural Action Partnership Program.

B. The Rural Action Partnership Program shall be responsible for coordinating and assisting in:

1. Establishing a statewide toll free telephone program to serve as a point of first contact between persons, business entities, groups, associations, organizations, state and local government officials and others for purposes of facilitating contact with service providers, providing information regarding primarily rural economic development entities, programs, resources and activities and to provide assistance to persons, firms and representatives of governmental entities attempting to establish or expand a for-profit business in a rural area of the state;

2. Assisting in the coordination of primarily rural economic development programs offered within the state;

3. Administering a rural economic development and employer regional outreach program that divides the state into at least four

areas with each such area to be served by at least one rural regional economic development coordinator who shall assist in the establishment and coordination of rural economic development partnerships;

4. The accumulation and organization of information to be used as a rural economic development resource database, including, but not limited to, contact information for persons, firms, groups, organizations and others involved in rural economic development issues, availability of federal, state and local incentive programs, and, subject to available funding, the development and maintenance of a rural development Internet web site to promote access to ~~such~~ said information;

5. A comprehensive survey of natural resources located or available in primarily rural areas of the state in order to match potential value-added business activity with such resources;

6. The sponsorship, with key economic development partners, of periodic rural development summits or conferences for purposes of communicating about the existence of the Rural Action Partnership Program, availability of assistance, development of additional services consistent with the mission of the Program and such matters as may be conducive to improving the delivery of services with respect to rural development programs and rural economic development; and

7. Providing such services and developing such programs, functions or initiatives that may be necessary for or that would promote the development of rural resources and the rural economy.

C. The mission of the Rural Action Partnership Program shall be to foster healthy and sustainable rural communities through small business retention, expansion, and entrepreneurial development.

D. The primary emphasis for the regional economic development outreach specialists shall be to serve the needs of the communities or regions with declining populations or with economic indicators

that suggest additional information and resources would be of benefit to improve the economic conditions of such community.

E. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce, in support of the mission of the Rural Action Partnership Program, may request the assistance of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Department of Environmental Quality, Oklahoma Corporation Commission, Oklahoma Tax Commission, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry, Oklahoma Department of Tourism, Department of Transportation, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education or such other agencies, boards, commissions, departments or other entities of state government as may be required in order to assist with the implementation of the programs for which the Rural Action Partnership Program is responsible.

F. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce shall conduct an annual evaluation of the Rural Action Partnership Program. Not later than December 31, 2007, the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce shall make a report regarding the actions and functions of the Rural Action Partnership Program to the Governor, Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the State Senate. The report shall summarize the activity and results of the Program and may contain recommendations for changes in the functions of the Program, including changes in funding.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2006.

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